

## **Health and Medical Research Fund - Research Fellowship Awards**

### **Guidelines for Accounting, Reporting, Project Monitoring and Change Requests**

These guidelines serve to remind the Fellowship Applicants (FAs) and the Administering Institutions (AIs) about the key issues relating to accounting, reporting and monitoring requirements of research fellowship awards funded by the Health and Medical Research Fund (HMRF).

FAs and AIs shall comply with these guidelines in conjunction with the signed Agreements. FAs are advised to contact the research offices of their respective AIs for accounting and research administrative support. For further queries, please contact the Research Fund Secretariat (the Secretariat) (Email: rfs@fhb.gov.hk).

The reports, change requests and claims for reimbursement shall be submitted to the Secretariat.

#### **1. Accounting arrangements**

Expenditures incurred in the claims for reimbursement shall only cover the fellowship period between the commencement date and end date (both dates inclusive) as set out in the Agreement. Additional funding or cost of work incurred before the commencement of the fellowship is **not** allowed. The training cost should not exceed \$200,000<sup>1,2</sup>.

- (a) Claims for reimbursement shall only cover the period between the commencement and end date of the fellowship as set out in the Agreement.
- (b) Claims for reimbursement should be duly submitted to the Secretariat when expenditures are incurred. Claims shall be made no more frequently than bimonthly.

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<sup>1</sup> For awards granted in the 2019 Open Call and thereafter, the ceiling of training cost is increased from \$200,000 to \$400,000. The funding ceiling for an award remains as \$1,200,000.

<sup>2</sup> For awards granted in the 2020 Open Call and thereafter, the training cost shall be used for overseas training programme. Up to two round-trips economy of air passage are supported.

- (c) Prior approval from the Secretariat is required for budget virement between any two categories (e.g. “Staff” and “Other Expenses”), or addition of new budget items, or change of staff composition.
- (d) Revised monthly salary for budgeted staff due to cost-of-living adjustment under AI’s policy is automatically approved **provided** that the total of the staff budget remains unchanged.
- (e) Overspending of any individual item within any category is automatically approved **provided** that the accumulated overspending of any individual item does not exceed 10% of the item’s budget **and** does not exceed the ceiling for that item as set out in the grant policy (e.g. a maximum of HK\$20,000 for publication costs) **and** the budget total of the category concerned is unchanged.
- (f) Payment will be made within **six weeks** to AI after satisfactory progress of the project, verification and acceptance by the Government of each reimbursement claim form submitted by the AI. The Secretariat will put the claim on hold under the following circumstances –
  - i. When the project account is frozen due to unsatisfactory progress and overdue deliverables such as report and financial statement.
  - ii. After the reminder has been issued to the FA/AI for submission of Training or Interim Report (IR) or Final Report (FR) and before the acceptance of the relevant report.
  - iii. The accumulated claim amount has been over 80% of the total approved budget or the ceiling for payment as specified in the Agreement.

(g) Research offices and finance offices should make proper arrangements **in advance** with related department(s) and audited firm(s) and submit the certified financial statement (FS) / Audited Account (AA) on time. **IR/FR cannot be accepted without submission of certified FS / AA, which will affect the payment to the AI.**

## 2. Submission and assessment of reports

- (a) Training Reports (TRs), Progress Reports (PRs), IRs, FRs and Dissemination Reports (DRs), certified FSs and AA shall be submitted according to the specific due dates and formats.

- (b) A list of publications (including in press), patents and other Intellectual Property Rights that have resulted directly from the research project shall be provided. FA/AI should seek written consent from the Government before filing a patent application. Please provide information on the patent to be filed or obtained where applicable. If there is no patent related items, please state “None”.
- (c) During the submission of Final Reports, please provide an equipment list, if any, containing (i) serial number or unique stock code; (ii) date of purchase; (iii) location; and (iv) actual value of each item of equipment purchased under the grant.
- (d) Reminders will be issued to FA and AI before the due date of submission and deliverables will be assessed by the respective parties set out below –

Deliverables	Reminder issued before due date of submission		Reviewing parties* for PR, TR, IR, Secretariat**
	To FA	To AI	
Progress Report (PR)	Two weeks	–	Secretariat**
Training Report (TR)	One month	One month	Research Assessment (RFAP) members  Please refer to <b>Annex A</b> for the workflow.
Interim Report (IR) and certified financial statement (FS)	One month	One month	
Final Report (FR), Dissemination Report (DR), certified FS and AA	One month	One month	

\* *The progress of each fellowship award is monitored by three RFAP members (Assessor 1, 2 and 3) with the most relevant expertise assigned by the Secretariat. If the report is rejected by Assessor 1, the FA will be required to revise the report for further review by Assessor 1. If the revised report remains unsatisfactory as determined by Assessor 1, it will be reviewed by Assessor 2. The report will be rejected if both Assessor 1 and Assessor 2 find it unsatisfactory. If Assessor 1 and Assessor 2 have different views, the revised report will be reviewed by Assessor 3. The final decision will be come up by majority vote of the three Assessors.*

\*\* *The Secretariat may seek views from Assessors assigned to monitor the progress of the award where appropriate.*

- (e) Warning email will be issued to FA and AI if overdue deliverable(s) is not submitted after issuance of two overdue reminders with extended deadline. The following actions will be carried out if FA fails to submit the deliverable(s) by the final deadline given in the warning email: termination of award, recovery of the grant, marking track record and debarment from applying and receiving HMRF grants.
- (f) The account of on-going project with unsatisfactory progress or overdue report(s) will be frozen (i.e. all claims and payment will be put on hold) until the outstanding issues have been resolved. FA and AI will be informed of the decision once the project account is frozen.
- (g) In the TR, PR and IR, FA should report the progress according to the expected target(s) during the reporting period set out in the Timetable of the approved proposal / special condition(s) stipulated in the Agreement or specified by the Secretariat. In particular, if the study involves subject recruitment, please state the number of subjects recruited up to a date and the difference from the expected target(s) during the report period and the total target(s) of the study.
- (h) FA should adhere to the approved study design of their ongoing programmes. If the progress is behind schedule, FAs should submit practical and feasible contingency plans together with the PR or IR whichever earlier to address the possible pitfall(s) so as to complete the project. In order to ensure the approved projects can come up with satisfactory outcomes, recruiting the same group of subjects to multiple studies (especially COVID-19 studies) with direct conflict to each other should be avoided.
- (i) According to the Agreement, FA and AI shall render their advice or recommendation on an impartial basis without giving favour to any particular product or service in the project. FA and AI shall seek the Government's permission to all or any facts which may reasonably be considered to give rise to a situation where the financial, professional, commercial, personal or other interests of the FA or AI or any of their respective associates and associated persons, or any member of the Project Team (i.e. Co-applicant(s)), conflict or compete, or may conflict or compete, with the FA's or the AI's duties under the approved project.
- (j) The Government's contribution shall be properly acknowledged in all research outputs, academic conference presentations and press conference materials, specifically "**Health and Medical Research Fund, the Food and Health Bureau,**

**The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region". Please include the project reference number for easy reference.**

- (k) FA should strictly adhere to the format of FR and DR, in particular a maximum of 2,000 words for DR (including main text, references, key messages) with not more than 3 tables and/or figures and 5 references. DR should be brief and written in non-technical language to facilitate wider dissemination. According to the guidelines of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors, DR is considered as "acceptable secondary publications" with proper citation of the primary reference and is not a duplicate publication.
- (l) A list of publications (including in press), patents and other Intellectual Property Rights that have resulted directly from the research/project shall be provided. FA/AI should seek written consent from the Government before filing a patent application. Please provide information on the patent to be filed or obtained where applicable. If there is no patent related items, please state "None".
- (m) During the submission of FRs, please provide an equipment list, if any, containing (i) serial number or unique stock code; (ii) date of purchase; (iii) location; and (iv) actual value of each item of equipment purchased under the grant.
- (n) Subject to Assessor 1's advice, FA will be invited to revise FR **ONCE** if it is not accepted. If the revised FR is still not accepted after taking the majority vote of the three Assessors, close the project according to the contractual Agreement (may hold final payment or require a full/partial recovery of grants) and marking track record of FA.

### **3. Dissemination of results**

- (a) FR eligible for dissemination of results will be uploaded to the Secretariat's website within **one month** after closure of the fellowship. The relevant DR may be published in Hong Kong Medical Journal Supplement where appropriate. FA should provide valid justifications for the Government's consideration if deferral for dissemination of FR or DR is required. Please note according to the Agreement, the Government or FA/AI shall have the right to use the Materials for non-commercial academic purpose without the consent from each party.
- (b) The impact of projects conducted during the fellowship period with FRs rated

“Accepted” are evaluated on a regular basis using a “payback framework” – an internationally recognised measure of health research activities, **two years** after the end date of the fellowship. It is also a **contractual requirement** that FA and AI shall provide information relating to projects under the HMRF for the purpose of evaluation after project completion.

- (c) FAs are required to share their experience and research findings after completion of the fellowship at the Health Research Symposium organised by the Food and Health Bureau.

#### **4. Project monitoring**

- (a) FAs shall comply with the Clearance Requirements as stipulated in the Agreements. The study protocol/ scope approved by the AI’s Institutional Review Board (IRB)/ Ethics Committee (EC) must be the same as that approved by the HMRF.
- (b) For projects requiring to use data from the Hospital Authority (HA), please submit the relevant approval(s) from the Central Panel on Administrative Assessment of External Data Requests of HA to the Secretariat in a timely manner. Please visit <http://www3.ha.org.hk/data/Provision/Index/> for details.
- (c) FAs and/ or AIs shall notify the Secretariat effectively and as early as possible of any event which is likely to prejudice the project outcome, whether in a qualitative, quantitative or financial aspect, or the timely completion of the project.
- (d) If the FA/ AI fails to comply with any terms and conditions stipulated in the Agreement, the fellowship will be subject to termination and recovery of grants.
- (e) Any improprieties such as misconduct, early termination, incomplete fellowship without valid justification and non-disclosure of research work done before commencement date will lead to penalty actions. Please refer to the *Management of Track Records of Applicants* (**Annex B**), which can be downloaded from the Secretariat’s website (<https://rfs.fhb.gov.hk>).

## 5. Change requests

- (a) **Prior approval from the Secretariat** is required for all change requests. Each request will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- (b) **To change a Co-Applicant (Co-A)**: The FA and/or AI shall seek prior approval to replace a Co-A by nominating a suitably qualified candidate and submitting the CV of the nominee. Prior approval is also required to remove a Co-A without replacement. The FA and/or AI shall submit a written request with rationale justifying removal and no replacement is necessary. The FA should provide written consent from the Co-A concerned for removing the Co-A from the Project Team.
- (c) **To change the Mentor**: The FA and/or AI shall seek prior approval to replace a mentor by nominating a suitably qualified faculty with justifications in a written request.
- (d) **To extend the project end date**: Each fellowship lasts for a maximum of two consecutive years<sup>3</sup> (inclusive of both training and research components). The FA and/or AI shall seek prior approval to extend the end date by submitting a written request with full justifications and the revised work plan. **The FA and/or AI shall make internal arrangements to absorb the expenditure incurred during the extended project period.** Normally, request for project extension submitted after the completion date of the fellowship will not be considered. Request for extending the fellowship period over two consecutive years will be considered on a discretionary basis.
- (e) **To change the study protocol**: Change of scope (objective) of training plan and research plan is not allowed. The FA and/or AI shall seek prior approval to change the study protocol (e.g., the number of subjects and inclusion/exclusion criteria) by providing full justifications with a discussion of the anticipated impact on the study objectives and timeline. **FA should indicate the amount of reduced budget in the request for reduction of study scope. The amount of approved budget shall be reduced proportionally to the reduction of the scope of study. The Government shall not be liable to make any payment to the FAs, AIs or any other persons as a result of termination or reduction in scope of the study or extension of study period.** FA shall obtain the relevant approvals from the IRB/EC and regulatory bodies after a change of study protocol is granted.

- (f) To change the training plan: The FA shall seek prior approval to change the training plan (e.g., format / nature of the training course and training period) by providing full justifications with a discussion of the anticipated impact on the objective and timeline.
- (g) Decision on a change request will be normally issued to FA and/or AI within 10 working days upon receipt of the request. Longer processing time is needed if approval from RFAP member(s) is required. The approving authorities for change requests are set out below –

Change requests	Approving authorities*
Change of Co-A i. Without replacement ii. With replacement	RFAP member(s) Secretariat
Change of Mentor	RFAP member(s)
Protocol change	
Change of Training	
Project extension i. Extended fellowship to be completed <u>within</u> 2 consecutive years <sup>3</sup> ii. Extended fellowship to be completed <u>over</u> 2 consecutive years <sup>3</sup>	Secretariat  RFAP member(s)

\* *Each fellowship award is monitored by three RFAP members (Assessor 1, 2 and 3) with the most relevant expertise assigned by the Secretariat. If the request is rejected by Assessor 1, the FA may be required to respond to Assessor 1's comments for further review by Assessor 1. If the request is still rejected by Assessor 1, it will be reviewed by Assessor 2. The request will be rejected if both Assessor 1 and Assessor 2 reject the request. If Assessor 1 and Assessor 2 have different views, the request will be reviewed by Assessor 3. The final decision will be come up by majority vote of the three Assessors.*

<sup>3</sup> For awards granted in the 2019 Open Call and thereafter, the normal duration for each fellowship is two years. Project extension up to cumulative period of 12 months with valid justifications will be considered.



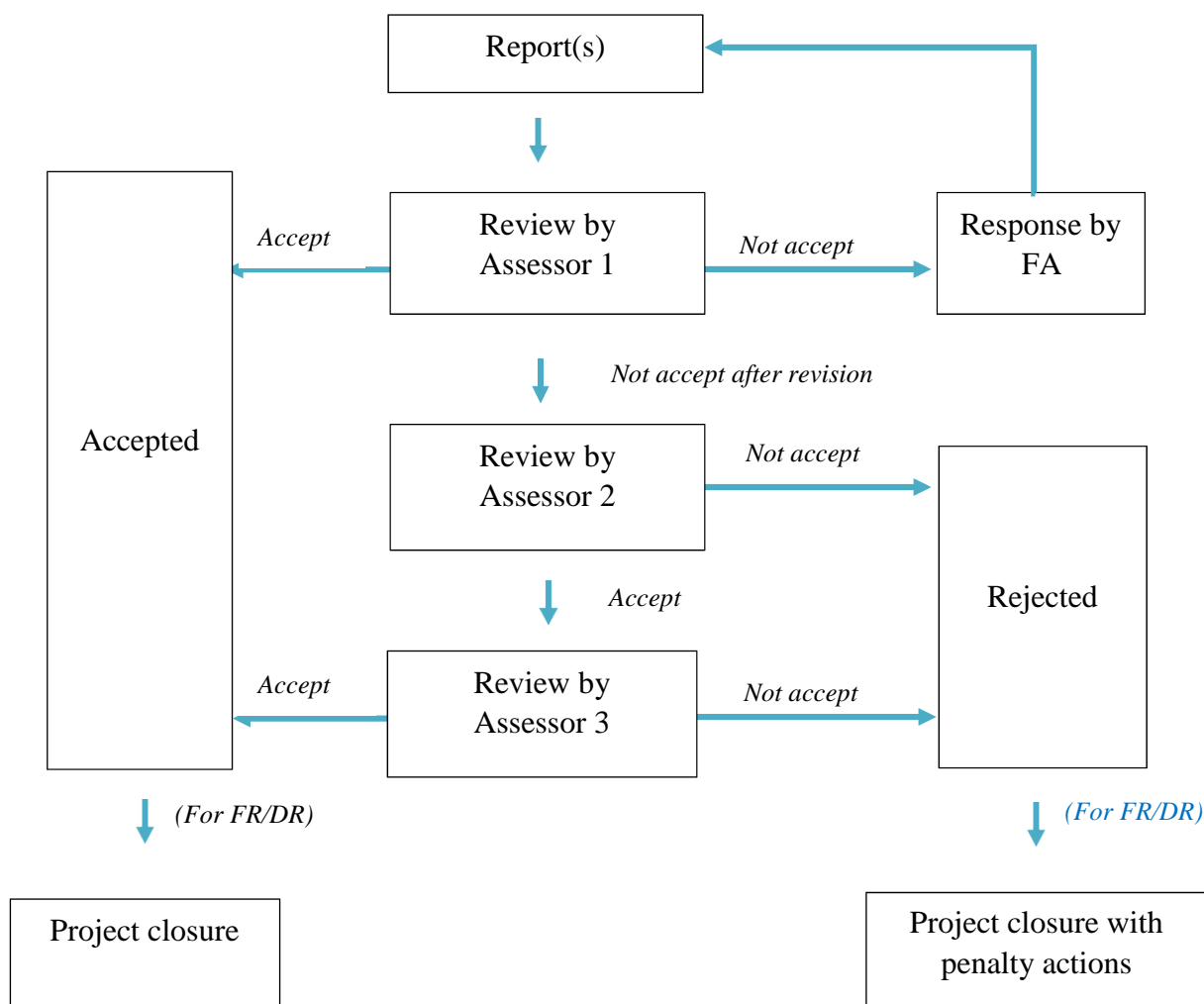
## 6. Improprieties of Applicants

Improprieties may arise at any point in the funding cycle (e.g. grant application submission, peer review, ongoing project or post-completion evaluation) including –

- i. Scientific misconduct;
  - ii. Non-disclosure of important information (e.g. conflict of interest (COI), double dipping and research work done before project commencement); and
  - iii. Non-compliance to funding regulations without valid justifications (e.g. failure to submit final report and outcome evaluation, early termination, incomplete, etc.).
- (a) AIs should have in place adequate systems to ensure the quality of research conducted by FAs and their compliance to the terms and conditions under the HMRF, in particular effective mechanisms for identifying and handling allegations of scientific misconduct.
- (b) In the event of improprieties, FA and/ or Co-A concerned will be requested to provide clarification. Where violation of research ethics is suspected (including plagiarism, fraudulence, non-disclosure of important information), the respective AI will be requested to conduct investigation and report the findings to the Secretariat within three months. The RFAP member will examine the case and advise the next course of actions according to the *Management of Track Records of Applicants* (**Annex B**). Research Council's decision on penalty actions is final.
- (c) Normally, FA and/ or Co-A and AI concerned will be informed of the decision and consequence of improprieties within 6 months. Longer processing time is needed where complex issues or multiple parties are involved.

Research Fund Secretariat  
Research Office  
Food and Health Bureau  
December 2021

**Review of Reports of Research Fellowship Awards**



**Remarks -**

1. Only one revision of IR/ FR is allowed.
2. TR will be sent either with IR or FR/DR to Assessor(s) for assessment
3. If the revised FR/ DR are not accepted after taking the majority vote of the three Assessors, close the project according to the contractual Agreement (may hold final payment or require a full/partial recovery of grants from AI) and mark FA's track record.

DR: Dissemination Report

FR: Final Report

IR: Interim Report

TR: Training Report

**Management of Track Records of Applicants<sup>1</sup>**  
**(Effective from 1 November 2018)**

<b>Improprieties</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Gravity</b>	<b>Actions<sup>2,3</sup></b>
Scientific Misconduct <sup>4</sup>	Plagiarism, fraudulence, etc.	Serious	i. Disqualification in the related funding exercise; and ii. Debar <sup>5</sup> for 5 years
Double dipping not declared	Receiving grant from HMRF or any of its preceding funding schemes, or other funding agencies (local or overseas)	Heavy	i. Disqualification in the related funding exercise; and ii. Debar for 1 year
	Submission of grant applications or similar proposals to HMRF or any of its preceding funding schemes, or other funding agencies (local or overseas)	Light	Warning letter
Conflict of Interest not declared	The nominated reviewer(s) as a direct relative or a close personal contact with Principal Applicant (PA) or Co-applicant (Co-A)	Medium	Disqualification in the related funding exercise
	The PA has the following relationship(s) with the nominated reviewer in the past 3 years at the time of grant application – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- research collaborator</li> <li>- mentor/student</li> <li>- work colleagues in the same department</li> <li>- employer/ employee/ business partner</li> </ul>	Medium	Disqualification in the related funding exercise

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise determined, the principal applicant shall be held primarily responsible for the conduct of the project and any penalties imposed as a consequence of any misconduct or non-compliance.

<sup>2</sup> The track record of the principal applicant who has committed any of the improprieties mentioned in this Annex shall be marked for and taken into account when considering of future grant applications for up to 5 years.

<sup>3</sup> If the misconduct is reported after commencement of the study, assessment will be made to determine whether any of the approved amount should be returned to the Government.

<sup>4</sup> Scientific misconduct means fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, or other practices that seriously deviate from those that are commonly accepted within the scientific community for proposing, conducting, or reporting research. It does not include honest error or honest differences in interpretations or judgements of data.

<sup>5</sup> Debarment covers applying and receiving grants from the Health and Medical Research Fund in the capacity of principal applicant.

**Annex B**

<b>Improprieties</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Gravity</b>	<b>Actions<sup>2,3</sup></b>
Conflict of Interest not declared	The Co-A has the following relationship(s) with the nominated reviewer in the past 3 years at the time of grant application – <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- research collaborator</li><li>- mentor/student</li><li>- work colleagues in the same department</li><li>- employer/ employee/ business partner</li></ul>	Light	Warning letter
Non-compliance	No submission of final report by deadline without valid justification	Heavy	i. Withhold funding of the project or recovery of the grant ii. Debar for 2 years and until the final report is submitted, whichever is later
	Any of the following without valid justification – <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Early termination</li><li>- Incomplete project</li><li>- Research work done before project commencement not declared</li></ul>	Heavy	i. Partial payment or recovery of grant ii. Debar for 2 years
	Final report graded “Unredeemable” or “Unacceptable”	Medium	Withhold 10% or 20% of the grant subject to the terms and conditions in the agreement